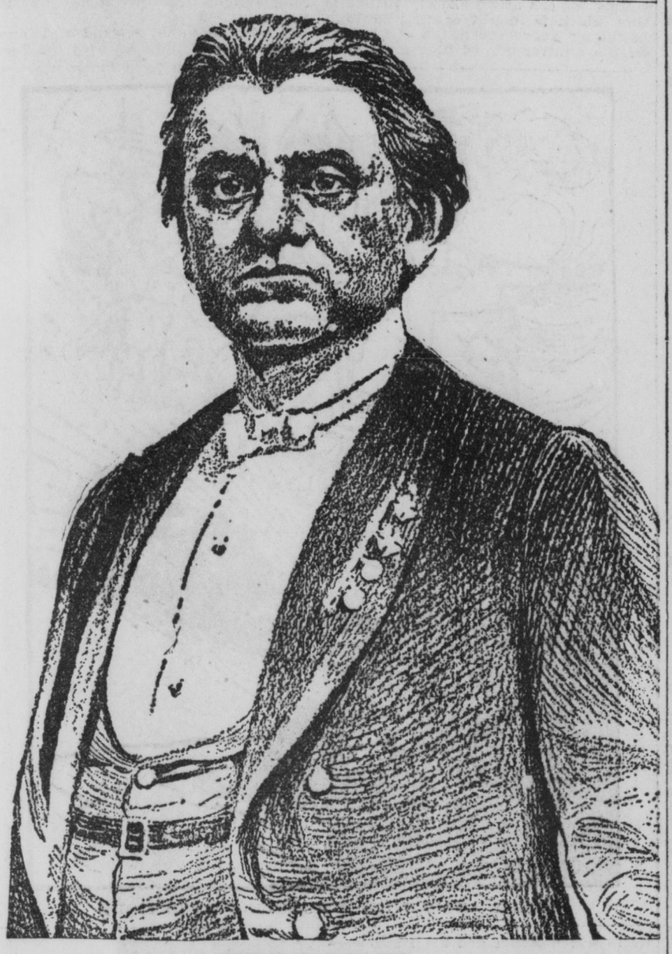
FROM DREAM ACTOR TO AMERICA'S GREATEST IMPRESSARIO

Story of Heinrich Conried, the German Lad Who Has Won Fame and Fortune.

BY GUY T. VISKNISKKI.

Heinrich Conried, as a boy, dreamed of being a great actor; to-day he is America's leading impresario, known to two continents by reason of his production of "Parsifal." And, furthermore, he is an actor of no mean ability.

One day, away back in 1853, when Mr. Conried was five years old, he was taken by his parents on a visit to an aunt, who lived in the same town, Bielitz, in Silesia, where Mr. Conried was born and raised. With the aunt lived the frau directorin of the Bielitz Theater. Somehow, as children will get such ideas, young Heinrich had had it in his head for some time to be an actor in the local playhouse. He had become so determined on this point that, soon after he was brought forward and introduced to the frau directorin, he confided to her that he wanted her to engage him on the spot to act in her theater.



HEINRICH CONRIED.

The frau directorin looked down at the boy, smiled, then said, as she patted him on the head:

"Come Back in 20 Years."

"Not now, little man, but you come back in twenty years—twenty—then maybe—we'll see."

Heinrich Conried came back at the end of twenty years, almost to a day, in 1873. He came as an insignificant member of a German traveling company, but he was welcomed like a prince. The town turned out to greet him, the factory in which he had worked as a weaver was gaily decorated in his honer, all Bielitz suspended business to offer congratulations to him and his parents, and all Bielitz went to the theater and thunderously applauded their fellow townsman whenever his extremely minor part brought him on the stage.

Heinrich Conried had become a great actor in the eyes of the people of his boyhood; but Heinrich Conried's dream had always been more ambitious—he longed to be a great actor before the world at large; and so, his day of triumph over, he again took up the struggle, for to be able to tread the boards of the theater of his native town young Conried had worked hard as well as dreamed for twenty years .

As a school boy he spent hours reading plays, and other hours at the theater, studying, in his boyish way, the actors on the stage. His school days over, his father, who took no stock in his son's histrionic ambitions, apprenticed him to a weaver. The son struck a bargain with his father. "I will work hard if you will let me go where I please and do what I please when my apprenticeship is over," he said; and the father agreed.

Became a Meister.

Heinrich stuck to his part of the agreement for two years; then, one day he was able to report to his father that he had become a "meister;" his "meisterschaft" had been accepted—his original design in fifteen colors of "Faust and Marguerite" had been declared perfect in every thread. His apprenticeship had not caused him to be weaned from his ambition.

Not long afterwards the father fulfilled his part of the bargain, and young Conried started from Bielitz for Vienna.

He went to the capital to become an actor; he became instead a mere clerk in a commission house; he had to, or starve. Then, when he had proved his mettle, his brothers, who were well-to-do, got him a position in a bank.

Perhaps they thought the clink of gold would win the lad from his heart's desire, but the new work simply gave him time to dream more and money enough to enable him to get his breakfasts at a restaurant where an actor was in the habit of taking his meals.

Mr. Conried confesses that he ate at that restaurant with the sole purpose of being near the actor; but in the course of time he and the Thespian became acquainted, and the latter found out his new acquaintance's hopes. The result was a meeting with the great Foerster of the Burg Theater.

Taken Up by Foerster.

Foerster took to young Conried at once. Conreid had no time to attend Foerster's classes—he had to earn a livelihood by day in the bank—so Foerster instructed him in the early morning while taking his recreation and the waters.

The new pupil poved apt; in a few weeks he was told to attend a test rehearsal at the theater. He did so with fear and trembling; he was chosen for an engagement out of a possible two-score of contestants. He was at last a member of the Burg Theater, the goal of all Austrian actors, and straightway he gave up his position in the bank.

But his troubles were not yet over. He had left his clerical position; he was penniless; on the third day of his engagement he appeared hungry and weak at the theater.

Foerster noticed his pupil's paleness and inquired as to its cause. Young Conried protested that he was all right, but half an hour later, as he sat at the breakfast table as the guest of Foerster, the latter found out what was the matter with the new member of his company, and advanced him money so that he would not have to go hungry again.

After that Conreid's affairs ran more smoothly. He applied himself diligently, and what time he did not put in study on his own parts he spent in acquainting himself with Foerster's methods as actor and as manager, as he revealed them at the Burg Theater. Thus, he early became an opponent of the star system and an unwavering believer in Foerster's system—all around excellence and the suppression of even the greatest actor whenever necessary for the general result. And, among many other lessons taught him by his benefactor, he learned how complicated plays could be staged with facility, if the problem is approached in the right way and the plans clearly thought out beforehand.

Returned to His Native Town.

Such, in brief, were Mr. Conried's struggles from the day he left Bielitz until his triumphal return. And after that, too, there came more hard work, for he was determined to lead in his profession and show his family, who detested the idea of having a member an actor, that he was right when he entered it. So, while playing with traveling companies in Austria and Germany he studied as well, and seized every opportunity to appear in tragedy and comedy and to supplement further his knowledge of the managerial end of the business.

Gradually his application told. He was given better and better parts; he was permitted in Berlin to create the role of "Dr. Klaus," which he still plays whenever the spirit moves him at the Irving Place Theater, New York; and then, his ability at last proven, he was given the leading parts in the classic comedies of Schiller and Goethe, thereby gaining considerable fame throughout Germany as a comedian.

Stage Manager in Dresden Theater.

Thus Herr Conried's affairs progressed until 1878, when Dr. Adolph Neuendorff, of the Germania Theater in New York, found him in Dresden as stage manager of a theater there. Dr. Neuendorff was in Germany looking for a stage manager; he studied Herr Conried's way of doing things for a while, then went to him and offered him a similar position at the Germania.

Mr. Conried at first was averse to leaving Dresden. But Dr. Neuendorff pressed him so hard that eventually he said:

"Well, if you can get my father's permission to my going to America, all right; I'll take the position."

"I did not think the doctor could get such a permission," says Mr. Conried, in telling the incident, "because my father was old, and I felt that he would not want me to be so far away from him. So I thought it a good way to turn Dr. Neuendorff aside. But imagine my surprise some days later when he stood before me and said:

"'Herr Conried, I have been to Bielitz. I have talked with your father. I have told him of the splendid opportunities that await you in America; and he gives you his permission to go with me—and his blessing.'"

Came to America.

There was nothing else for Mr. Conried to do except to come to America, and his new employer came with him. He remained at the Germania for a year, then, in 1879, he played star engagements throughout the country, in towns with a big German population, such as Cincinnati, Peoria, St. Louis, Milwaukee; and the next year returned to New York as the chief stage manager of the Thalia, to become its manager during the ensuing twelve months.

Here Mr. Conried, by applying the methods taught him by Foerster, brought the Thalia from a state of decadence into one of prosperity. He also opened the eyes of the theatrical world by his acting, for his love of the stage frequently drew him on to it whenever his managerial duties permitted.

Mr. Conried remained at the Thalia until William S. Steinway sought him out and asked him to take charge of the Irving Place Theater. Mr. Steinway admitted that it had run down, and added that he felt Mr. Conried was the only man he knew who could bring it up to a high standard. Mr. Conried looked over the field, thought he saw a good opportunity, and accepted Mr. Steinway's proposition. Now the Irving Place Theater is New York's leading German playhouse—made so by Mr. Conried, who from the moment he took control, applied the lessons taught him by his benefactor, Foerster.

How He Came to Produce "Parsifal."

Mr. Conried was now recognized as one of the leading managers of the metropolis and one of its prominent German actors. His boyhood's dream had been realized in large part, but now he dreamed another ambitious dream. It was nothing more or less than this: He knew that Wagner's famous opera of "Parsifal" had never been produced outside of Bayreuth; he also knew that it was common property, under law, of the world at large; he would produce "Parsifal" in America sooner or later. Immediately he set about to prepare his plans for such a production in order to have them ready against the day of the opportunity that he felt would one day present itself. To that end, month after month, year after year, he kept track of the grand opera stars of Europe, and evolved his plans for the opera—how he would secure a copy of the carefully guarded score; how he would produce the scenic effects; how he would form his company; and a thousand and one things that occur to the mind of a manager.

SCENE FROM "PARSIFAL."

Planned for Ten Years.

For ten years he planned and rearranged his plans; then Maurice Grau abdicated as America's grand opera impresario. Mr. Conried was ready for just such an opportunity—in sporting parlance, he was "trained to the minute." Training told, and he was chosen to fill the position vacated by Mr. Grau.

What followed is pretty well known throughout Europe and America. But it is not so well known that Mr. Conried attributes much of his success to his application of Foerster's methods to grand opera—lessons that were taught him by Vienna's great actor when young Herr Conried was dreaming of becoming some day a great actor—not America's leading impresario.

(Copyright, 1904, by Guy T. Viskniskkl.)

IT HAS THE CALL

Won on its Merits

Murray Hill Club Whiskey

MELLOWED BY AGE.

THIS PARTICULAR BRAND FOR PARTICULAR PEOPLE.

Has Caught the Taste of the Most Exacting.

JOS. A. MAGNUS & CO., CINCINNATI.

JUCHTER-HENGES CO., Sole Controllers.

CHICKENS WITH TAILS TWENTY FEET LONG

Japan and Korea have a most remarkable breed of chickens, such as are known nowhere else in the world. They have been brought to their present wonderful state of perfection by more than a thousand years of careful breeding and improvement.

These chickens are like our own chickens in body. Their plumage is exceedingly gorgeous, but what makes them wonderful is the fact that their tails are immense. A small chicken will have a tail of resplendent feathers from twelve to fifteen feet long; no breeder thinks much of a fowl with a tail less than a dozen feet long, and tails from twelve to fourteen feet are common.

The Japanese breeders have the record of one bird whose tail reached the length of twenty feet, with a few inches over for good measure.

These tails are almost always magnificent, shimmering in rich bronzes and crimsons and gold; and the breeders keep them wrapped in thin rice paper to protect them so that they shall not be bruised or smirched.

The breeding of the peculiar fowl began in Korea some time before the year 1,000 A. D., and for many centuries the industry was aided by the royal house, and great honors and riches were given to the man who managed to breed a particularly fine specimen. Consequently, for ages there have been families in Korea that did nothing generation after generation, except to breed long-tailed fowl. And naturally they became amazingly skillful in it.

It is supposed that the breed originated from some wild fowl, but no one knows what it was.

In Japan the art of producing these long tails was rewarded with extravagant generosity. In the Island of Shihoku, one of the biggest of the Japanese group, the ruler of the Province of Tosa, the Daimyo, used the best tail feathers as decoration for his spear, and every tail feather had a deep significance, so that quite a little system of heraldry and etiquette was built up around the long-tailed fowl.

As the feathers of the birds develop, they are made to sit on high perches, which are raised continually as the tail grows so that it shall never touch the floor. It is rather hard on the birds, and exemplifies again the old proverb that there is no great achievement without corresponding pains.

The Japanese have studied the subject so thoroughly that they have even worked out the best foods to give their fowl to make them produce the longest tails.

Mother of Pearl

By IZOLA L. FORRESTER.

Copyright, 1904, by Izola L. Forrester.

It was very quiet on the veranda. Half an hour before there had been a tea party there, but now the table was overturned, and the dishes scattered all about. It might have been the finale of a Roman feast, from the general wreck of pleasure, and the guests lay from the hammock to the foot of the steps in all styles of relaxation.

Polly Ann, the rubber lady, was under the table. Pink Baby and the stuffed cat bore each other company half way down the steps. The jumping rabbit had landed on the rail beside a Boston fern, and Mammy Dinah, and Jane Juliette leaned with loving wistfulness on each other's shoulders down in a shady corner under the lilacs. In the hammock, with the gray kitten cuddled cosily in her arms, was Pearl, fast asleep.

As Dixon came up the steps, he stopped at sight of the figure in the hammock, and the dolls, and the tea table. It brought a sudden ache to his heart that all of Vera's words had not called there. He went over to the hammock and kissed the flushed baby face.

The gray kitten awakened, and yawned with a lazy welcome in its outstretched paws, but Pearl slept on, and he entered the house. He heard a movement, and rustle of skirts overhead.

"Is it you? I will be down presently."

He did not answer. The day was warm even for May, and he was tired from the long, dusty ride on the suburban trolley from the city to Buena Vista. It was cool and dainty in the parlor, but something to-day, in the aspect of the very furniture, in its ecru linen covers, seemed to forbid familiarity. Even the piano was swathed, and the shades half drawn. He hesitated at the door, and then changed his mind and went in. After all, he was merely paying a compulsory call. The atmosphere of the linen shrouded parlor corresponded with the purpose of his visit. He took a seat near the window, where he could catch a glimpse of the hammock, and the tumbled dolls, and over the veranda rail, the masses of lilac blossoms, and soft, pale greens of new foliage that lay in delicate outlines against the clear blue sky.

It was peculiar, the dread he had at a possible parting from Pearl. With Vera it was different. Their marriage was a mistake. He knew she would be happier alone. With persons less sensitive, perhaps, to the highest ideals of marriage, the trouble would have passed over, and been forgotten. With them there had been little said, only the deep consciousness of confidence broken, and love dulled to silent bitterness. He had not dreamt that she would take the destroying of the letter from such a point of view. It was a foolish letter of self betrayal, written, he knew, on the impulse of the moment, and he had believed his own action the only thing to do at the time, for Vera's sake, as well as the writer's. The instant he had seen it lying beside his place at the dinner table he had guessed its import.

"You have not read your letter," Vera had said, after Pearl had kissed them both good night, and gone upstairs with Kitty. "Do you know whom it is from?"

"Yes, I know." He had not met the glance of her clear eyes.

"Then why don't you read it?"

He had opened the letter before her, and read its contents. Hasty, repentant, and desperate, with the tell-tale signature. He twisted the sheet of paper in spiral shape, and deliberately lit his cigar with it.

Vera had sat in silence, watching the paper curl into a brown, scorched ruin, and the color had left her face.

"I shall not forget the lesson," she had said. "There is a portion of your life in which I have no concern. You should be more careful with your private mail in order to avoid annoyance."

He had not answered her. There was nothing to say unless he told all.

From that night, the rift had widened. She had never reproached him, but even the courtesy, that by tacit consent, took the place of the old, happy ways, seemed constrained. Finally, the only question had been when and how a separation could be best effected.

There must be no open scandal. He had arranged everything from a legal standpoint with the utmost privacy and expediency. It was to be simply separation by mutual consent, and he had made her income as large as lay in his power. She would retain the home, of course. He had decided to travel for a time.

There was only the question of Pearl. Was she not his child as well as Vera's?

He was watching the hammock when Vera came down stairs. He and spoke from force of habit to reassure her.

"She's asleep."

"The sun is shining in her eyes," said Vera. She spoke softly, and he waited while she went out on the veranda, and let down the Japanese screens in the hammock corner. It was all so natural and homelike, all save the look in her eyes when she entered the room and greeted him.

"I did not expect you until evening."

She did not sit down, but crossed the room to where a cut glass bowl of wild violets stood on a stand, and began to rearrange them, with careful fingers. He could not see her face, only the slender form in the gray linen gown that was one of his favorites, and the softly puffed masses of fair hair that he loved.

"I merely came out to tell you everything is fixed, and to see about my books and other things, and—Pearl."

She knew that it must come, that, in all events, it was the purpose of his visit, and yet, when he spoke the child's name, she turned quickly, her hands clenched, every tense line in her face and figure showing the defensive.

"What about Pearl?"

He was sorry for her, but yet with a sense of her selfishness. He had felt all along that the child was a neutral quantity, so to speak, in their disagreement and unhappiness. Whatever may have been the change in their feelings towards one another, in the love of each individually, Pearl occupied the same position. He felt that Vera should have realized and acknowledged this to herself. When he answered, it was with a firmness that showed the finality of decision.

"I did not include her in the breaking of other ties."

She was silent, her eyes closed, her hands clenched still in an effort at repression and self-control.

Her voice was low and hesitating.

"What do you propose doing? You cannot take her away from me."

"Not entirely. I would not do that. But she is mine as well as yours. There have been no changes made in the application for separation. Legally, there is no reason why my right to her should be questioned any more than yours."

She put one hand to her throat, as though the soft lace collar choked her.

"I am her mother," she said. "You must not take her away from me."

"Half of the year only."

"No, no, no." She walked to the window and looked out at the hammock. He followed her. There was just a glimpse of tangled yellow curls at the edge of the hammock, and one small, soiled hand, tanned, and dimpled.

"She's only a baby, Rob, not four yet. You couldn't take her away. What would she do without me, Rob? A man doesn't understand. Of course, legally, I suppose, it seems right. She is yours as well as mine, but more mine, oh, Rob, so much more mine, my own baby girl." Her voice broke in sobs, and she leaned her head on her arm against the window casing.

Dixon stared at the little hand that hung over the side of the hammock.

"She loves me, too," he said steadily, "I think I could make her happy, There has been no separation in the past in the love, just we three. When she was sick, you remember, the first year, and we thought she was going away from us, I watched, too, that night—you remember, and your sorrow was mine, and she seemed ours equally. And last summer, the day she was lost, you know the time, and we hunted all day, until at last there was only the river, and we went down to it together, expecting to find her there, she seemed as much mine as yours, did she not? The dread and love were equal, were they not? If yours were tenderer, then mine were doubled, for I had two to fear for."

She was silent and the sobbing was checked. He waited a moment, and then went on:

"By our own act and wish we have agreed to separate our lives. It is our affair, apart from the world, but not apart from Pearl. The time will come when she will ask why we did it. Whatever we may do towards shaping our own lives, we have no right to commit an act that will make her, from your standpoint, fatherless."

"I did not mean that," she interrupted. "You could see her—"

"As a stranger might call? It is not that, the mere seeing her, that I want. I simply mean to retain my place and influence in her life, the natural, daily development of half her life, at least."

"Hush!" said Vera warmingly.

A towsled, curly head appeared over the edge of the hammock. The gray kitten mewed, and slipped to the floor, as Pearl climbed out, and stood irresolute, her brown eyes heavy with the light of dreamland.

"Papa!" she called.

Their glances met.

"Don't tell her?"

"I want to ask her," said Dixon, and pulled aside the curtain. The instant she saw him, Pearl gave a joyous, frantic little cry, and promptly came through the open window to his arms. After the first ecstatic hug, she demanded.

"Where you was been at?"

"Been way off," said Dixon, gravely.

"Musn't go way off any more," Pearl shook her curls at him seriously, both arms folded lovingly around his neck. Dixon didn't look at her. His cheek was pressed to the yellow curls, and when he spoke for the first time his tone was unsteady.

"Listen, sweetheart, papa must go away, way off on the train, away from home and mamma and everything."

"Way from Pink Baby, an' Polly Ann, an' Mammy Dinah an' Jane Juliette?"

"Yes, love, away from all. Will you come with papa, all alone away from everybody but just papa?"

"Mamma, too," said Pearl, and Vera turned from them, her face white with suspense.

"Would you rather stay home, dear?" Dixon tried to speak naturally. "Mamma can't come with us. Would you rather stay home or go with me?"

"Want to do bofe," said Pearl hopefully.

"But, dear, heart, you can't—"

"Oh, don't, don't ask her, Rob." She spoke with quick insistence. "How can she understand the necessity for such a thing. It isn't fair to make her choose, that baby. I don't think she ought to even know—for awhile—until she is old enough to understand—"

"Understand what?" His eyes met hers with a long full look. "Do we understand ourselves perfectly?"

There was still the challenge in her answer.

"If it had not been for the letter, it might have been different. There can be no love where there is no confidence."

"But it was a small test for love to stumble over, was it not, dear?" He set Pearl down on the floor with the gray kitten. "I came for one more object to-day. I have heard from Hugh, and he is coming back."

"Hugh? Coming back?"

Pearl was between them on the rug, heels in air, watching the kitten juggle a ball on its four paws, as it rolled on its back. He handed her the letter over the two, and she read it through slowly.

"Dear old man:

"I am on my feet again. Bardwell says as long as you have met the note, he will take me back, and let it go. Will leave Los Angeles to-day, be in New York Friday, and back in the old place Monday. Thanks to you. But it's no good to thank you. You know how I feel, and what it means to me. I was crazy when I did it. I think I am sane now. Have you told Vera? I shall be out to see you both Friday anyway. As long as you forgive me, she must, too.

"Hugh."

"Hugh?" she repeated. "Hugh? What has he done?"

Dixon was silent. He was teasing the kitten, and Pearl was laughing jubilantly. She looked back at the letter. Hugh? Her twin brother. Except for Dixon himself, there was no one in all the world on whom her pride and faith centered as it did on Hugh. Dixon had known this, and and had given the boy his first foothold when he had come from college, a foothold in the business of the firm in which he himself was a junior partner. The words had a new meaning as she reread them. Hugh's flight—a note—Bardwell, the senior partner, willing to take him back—and it was Dixon who had met the note, and saved the boy's honor.

Her eyes were blinded by a rush of tears, as the truth swept over her. He had kept the knowledge of Hugh's disgrace from her until he had righted the wrong.

"He will be here to-night," said Dixon, tossing the ball through the window, where the kitten and Pearl scampered after it. "I thought you had better know before you meet him."

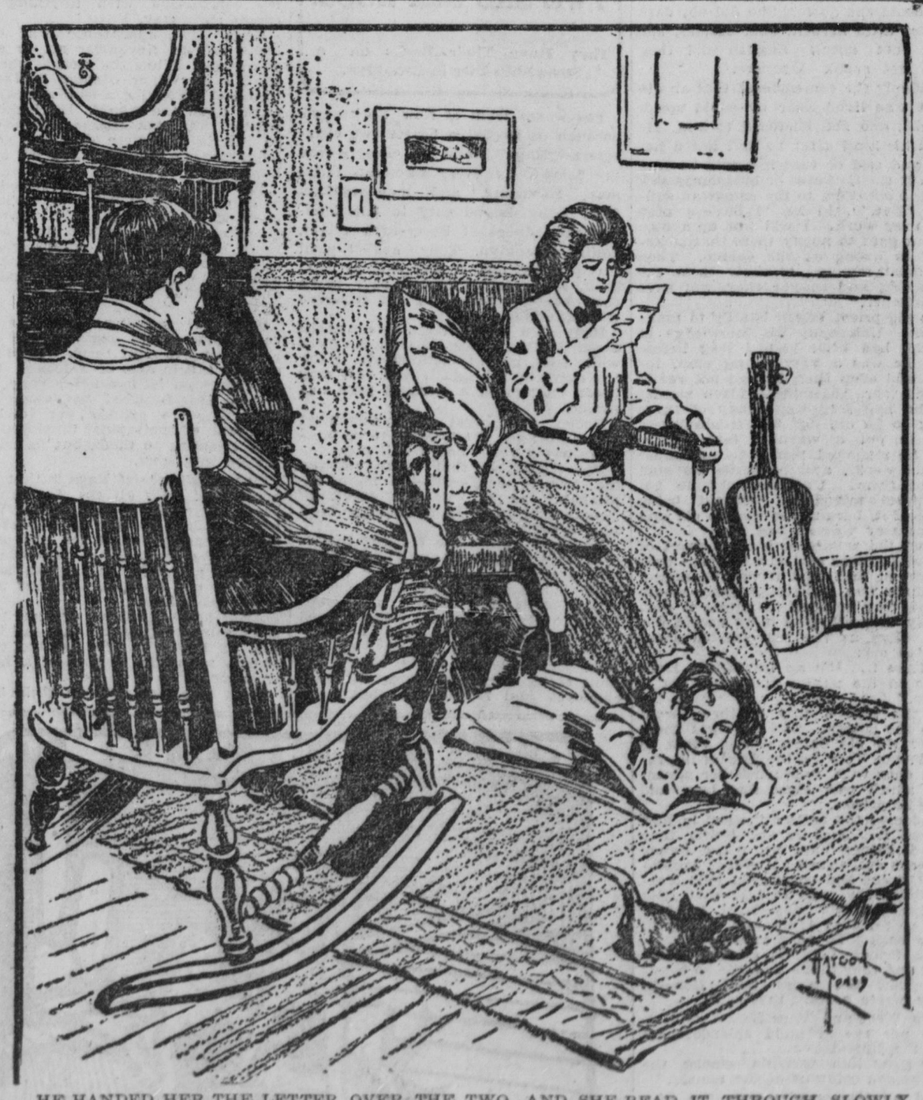
He crossed the room to where she stood, and took her close in his arms, in the old, proprietary way.

"What's the use, sweetheart," he said softly. "Life is so short. There is no blame for you. It was natural, but I couldn't show you that letter of confession that made the boy a criminal on his own evidence. He was in trouble, gambling, he says, and signed my name to a note for $3,000, and Bardwell honored it, and found out. Don't you see?"

She did not answer. He laid his cheek against the soft, fair hair, so like Pearl's fluffy golden locks, and the old tender name he had given her came to his lips, as it had in the baby days.

"Mother-of-Pearl," he said, "can't we forget, for her sake?" but she raised her face to his with eager wistfulness, her eyes pleading surrender.

"For our own, Rob," she whispered, "for our own, most of all." And they were both silent, while out on the veranda the gray kitten played tag with its shadow, and Pearl's pretty laugh floated in to them with the sunshine, and the perfume of the lilacs.



HE HANDED HER THE LETTER OVER THE TWO, AND SHE READ IT THROUGH SLOWLY.